

# Rare Animals of Louisiana



## Red-cockaded Woodpecker

*Picoides borealis*

**Rarity Rank:** S2/G3

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



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### Identification:

- Relatively small woodpecker
- Back and wings black with prominent white bars
- Crown, nape and back of neck are black and there is a black line from the bill down to side of neck
- Cheeks, side of neck and throat are white and has a white eyebrow line
- Tail is black with white on the outer feathers
- Underparts white with black streaks on flanks
- Males with inconspicuous red marks on sides of crown (“cockades”)
- Immatures brownish and may have red on center of crown
- Bill and legs black
- Adults up to 22 cm total length

### Habitat:

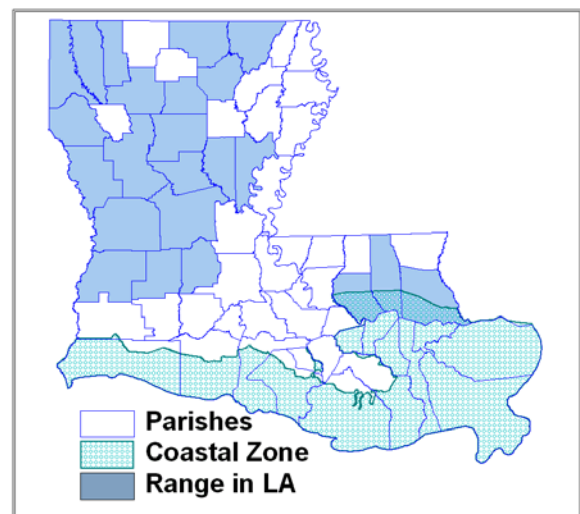
- Longleaf pine forests, mixed pine-upland hardwood forests with little or no hardwood midstory
- The average cavity tree ranges from 60 to 126 years for longleaf pine, 70 to 90 years for loblolly pine and 75 to 149 years for shortleaf pine
- Good habitat consists of pine stands with trees 22.9 cm and larger in diameter at breast height
- Also forages in pole stands

### Food habits:

Feeds on a variety of insects gleaned from beneath bark scales and also consumes fruits of shrubs and vines

### Range:

- Widely distributed, but local, throughout the southeastern coastal states from eastern Texas to southern Maryland
- Also in Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Oklahoma
- Formerly found throughout Louisiana in mature pine forests



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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## **Reproduction:**

- A cooperatively breeding species typically found in family groups that, in addition to the nesting pair, include up to 2 male offspring from previous nesting seasons
- Excavate cavities almost exclusively in live mature pines that have been infected with heartwood fungus
- Nesting occurs in adult male cavity
- 2 to 5 eggs are incubated for 10 to 13 days

## **Threats:**

- Loss of habitat from subdivision development
- Pine forests managed with short rotations
- Fire suppression, resulting in hardwood midstory on otherwise appropriate habitat

## **Beneficial Management Practices:**

- Identify and protect nesting clusters on private land
- Increase public awareness of species and its habitat requirements through educational materials
- Participate in state-private sector cooperatives to address management issues pertaining to the species
- Cluster augmentation (moving females from one cluster to another) for family groups with no females
- Utilize artificial cavities in areas where adequate trees for cavity construction do not occur

## **LA River Basins:**

Pearl, Pontchartrain, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine, Red River, Ouachita



U.S. Forest Service

Left: Active  
Red Cockaded  
Woodpecker  
cavity



Photo by Christopher A. Melder

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

[www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage) or call 225-765-2811

[www.BTNEP.org](http://www.BTNEP.org) or 1-800-259-0869